

A

ACCOUNT

Of the Late Proceedings of the

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Wesleyan Ministers

A T. 31

Salter's-Hall.

OCCASIONED

By the *Differences* amongst their Brethren in the Country : With some Thoughts concerning the *Imposition* of *humane Forms for Articles of Faith*.

In a Letter to the Revd. Dr. G A L E.

The Second Edition.

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AN
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Dissenting Ministers
 AT
Salters-Hall, &c.

Reverend SIR,

OUR publick Character
 hath drawn upon you the
 Trouble of this *Address* ;
 amongst the best Judges,
 you have the Reputation
 of an honest, open Mind,
 and a conformable Behaviour in Life ;
 I cannot therefore deny my self the Sa-

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A Denial of Christ's Redemption, and invalidating the Purchase of his Death.

A Congregation at Stoke-Newington, hereupon, thought fit to call upon their Minister, to declare his Faith on this Point; and for his non-compliance here-with, and continuing to preach up *Charity, Forbearance, brotherly Love*, and for waving Controversies so much above humane Comprehension, they made the Pulpit so uneasy to him, as at least ended in an entire Separation.

A dissenting Congregation in London, called upon a Member upon the same Jealousy, and for want of Satisfaction in his Answers, and his not coming up to their Standards of Orthodoxy, did the charitable Mr. Bragg, their Minister, proceed in the Name of the Congregation, to forbid him their Communion.

Many Congregations in the West, grew so warm on this Account, as to call upon their Ministers to declare here-upon, and to give Expectations of bringing Things to such an Extremity, as would be not only a *Scandal* to the *Dissenting Interest* in particular, but to the *Christian Name* in general.

To put a Stop, therefore, to these growing Evils, it was advised to settle such Articles, or Conditions of Communion,

nion, in a large Body of Ministers, as should not justify any Proceedings to *Exclusion*, or *Excommunication*, but upon very extraordinary Occasions ; and that such should be sent to their Brethren in the Country, under all possible Inducements of Advice, and Perswasion, to be received as the Measure of their Proceedings, in all *Church-Dealings* and *Censures*.

This I am informed, was very chearfully and readily complyed with ; and due Notice was thereupon given to all the approved Ministers in and about *London*, to meet ; and several Heads were drawn up to be Debated upon, and Settled, in the usual Form and Manner of such Assemblies, by a Majority ; the Decisions of which Majority were to be deemed the Acts of that Assembly, and reported as such to their Friends and Brethren in the Countries, who were intended to be served and governed thereby.

I need not observe to you, how natural it is to expect Warmth, Heat, and a Behaviour that deserves worse Appellations, from such a *Convention of Clergy*, if our Measures of judging may be taken from Precedents in like Cases. But such Indecencies of Zeal and Wrath as had no

Influ-

Influence upon the Issue of those Proceedings, and served only to expose the Actors to Ridicule or Compassion, I shall forbear relating to you, and take Notice only of what was of some Consequence to those Debates.

The most controverted Part, in the Course of these Proceedings, was with relation to some *Points of Faith*; and particularly the *Doctrine of the Trinity*. By some it was judged necessary to be express upon the main Articles of the *Christian Religion*, as set forth in some *Creeds, Catechisms, &c.* in order to justify the *Purity, and Orthodoxy of their Faith*; but these were opposed by others, who were for enlarging the *Conditions of Communion*, so far, as to affect none of the same Faith in Essentials, but only Cases of Imorality, and the like; who were for having only the inspired Writings, in the very Letter thereof, to be made a *Standard of Faith*, and a *Test of Church Membership*; and who were equally against all Forms, Interpretations, or Dictates of fallible Men, in Matters of so great Consequence, and what regarded eternal Salvation.

But upon this Head it was, with more than ordinary Vehemence, urged by some, to be *express and full* as to the *Doctrine*

Doctrine of the Trinity, in opposition to the Growth of *Arrianism*, and certain Notions supposed not consistent with several received *Creeds*, *Catechisms*, and *Confessions* upon that Point: And this was pressed as an essential *Boundary of Faith and Communion*; and without a Subscription to which, a Person could not be so much as deemed a *Christian*, or a fit Member of a *christian Congregation*. Hereunto were objected, not only the Reasons which were before produced against all humane Forms, and Interpretations, but because, likewise, it was making themselves a Party with those they were about to reconcile, and be a Means rather to widen, than heal those Differences that had their Rise upon that very Account.

In the Debates upon this last Head, you may remember, Sir, what Pains were taken to perplex and disguise the Matter in Controversy, and to mislead several in the Question expected to be put thereupon. Those on the *Affirmative*, That some express Articles, or Interpretations on this Head, should be made a Standard, &c. thought fit to prescribe their Belief in the Form of one of the *Articles of the Church of England*, and two *Answers* in the *Assemblies Catechism*,

tecbism, relating thereunto, and used great Diligence to represent a Refusal thereof, on this Occasion, a virtual Denial of the Doctrine therein contained, and an abetting, and declaring for, the Heresy of the *Arians*. This, therefore, put a hard Task upon the *Negative* Side, to convince many, that the Case before them was not with relation to any ones particular Belief concerning that Doctrine; but that the Question to be put, was only, Whether any humane Interpretations thereof should be made a Test of *Christian Communion*, or the Form of Expression only made use of in the inspired Writings; and the more effectually to remove the false Light, this was artfully thrown into by the other side, many of these were forced to declare their Assent to, and Belief of, that Doctrine as contained in the mentioned Forms, but opposed only its being made a Test to others, as a *Condition* of their *Church-Membership*, who might, perhaps, be not willing to be limited, or tyed up in their *Confessions*, and *Declarations* of *Faith*, to any other than the *Words of Inspiration*.

The Conduct of some hereupon, you cannot but reflect upon with Concern. The Intention of their Meeting was of-
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ten found necessary to be reminded to them, *viz.* to put a stop to Differences already grown scandalous and prejudicial to their common Interest as *Dissenters*; to justify the Favours then doing for them by the Legislature, in their deserving them, by a peaceable and forgiving Deportment towards one another; and to answer the Request of those worthy Gentlemen, who, out of a true publick Spirit, and a general Good, had intimated to them the Reasons for their Meeting: But either the *Zeal*, the *Pride*, or *Impatience* in *Contradiction*, of many, threw all these Regards into Neglect, and, with a very indecent *Haughtiness*, did Mr. Bradbury, in particular, demand, *Whetker that Assembly was to be directed by the Laity?* With the same ungoverned Passion, did another also ask, *Whetker they came there to be contradicted by Anabaptist Teachers?* Because, it seems, some of the opposite Side were of that Perswasion. And that Person was seconded by an equal ebullition of Wrath and Indecency, against the same Denomination; but they were retorted upon with a just Resentment, by one who was affected by that invidious Distinction; who told them, *The Persons they aimed at, were not Anabaptist Teachers, but*

Baptist Ministers, of which Name they were not ashamed; the former Appellation denoting *Re-Baptism*, which they disowned.

After a great deal of Bustle, Heat, Invective, and over-bearing Treatment, the *Question* was, with great difficulty, put, as before limited. On the appearance of Hands, the *Affirmatives*, with great Triumph, assum'd the Majority; but a Division was insisted upon, and the *Negatives* were to go up into the Gallery. While this was doing, it was very indiscreetly called out by some Person, *You that are against Persecution, come up Stairs!* Which was pretty evenly ballanced by one on the other side, calling out, *You that are for the Doctrine of the Trinity, stay below!* Whereupon, Justice was demanded on both sides for those Affronts, and wilful Perversions of the Question, but the Equality of the Offences made both sides relax those Demands, so that no part of their Jurisdiction was exerted upon this Account. Upon telling, the *Affirmatives* were 53, and the *Negatives* 57, so that it was carried by a Majority that no *humane Compositions, or Interpretations of the Doctrine of the Trinity, should be made a Part of those Articles of Advice, they were met to draw up, and agree to.* On

On this, the *Affirmatives* went out of all Patience, and Decency, and their forward Leader, Mr. Bradbury, thought fit, in his great Modesty, to call them the *scandalous Majority*, talked of Protesting against the Validity of their Decision, and required somewhat equivalent to a Scrutiny upon the Qualification of some *Voters*. The other, as far as could be permitted them, for *Clamour* and *Contradiction*, went on in Form upon further Matters laid down in the original *Scheme of Pacification*, and at last adjourned to that Day Seven-night.

The *Affirmatives*, who I beg leave to call *Orthodox*, because it is a Name they very fondly arrogate to themselves, met according to the foresaid Adjournment; but, after long and studied Perplexities, very openly told them of their Resolutions to embarrass all their Proceedings, without they came into their Measures; and, at last, resolved separately to Sign such *Forms* as had been rejected in open Majority. After this Division, some Overtures were made for a Re-union; but the Majority were too well aware of the Consequences to come into them, and therefore proceeded in the *Form* at first agreed upon, till they had finished the proposed Design.

I purposely omit mentioning any Persons by Name, unless the sprightly, the facetious, and the Orthodox Mr. Bradbury; because, on one Side, I am unwilling to let fall so much Censure and Reproach personally, as they may expect to meet with from the most equitable Judges, who are for Candour, Humanity, and a true christian Forbearance: And on the other Side, I dare to say, not one desires Acknowledgments of their Merits, in opposing the most detestable Imposition imaginable, a *religious Slavery*; but a Person of Mr. Bradbury's forwardness for Distinction, might perhaps be picqued at being lost in a Crowd, and hip'd in not being remarkable, tho' to his own Shame. But I shall have occasion to do him yet further Honour, before I finish my *Epistle* to you upon this novel Subject.

Before I finish my *Narrative* of this Affair within Doors, I cannot omit taking notice with how much Pleasure I heard it related concerning the Behaviour of one of the *Seniors* of this Assembly. This reverend Person, it seems, had been misled by the Bustle and Misrepresentations of the grand Question, so as to *divide* with the Orthodox; but upon a Recollection of his Mistake, at the fol.

following Meeting did he with great Clearfulness declare himself, and out of the fulness of an honest Heart, with Tears of Joy, did he congratulate his Brethren, upon the noble Appearance they had made for christian Liberty : And tho' he told them, as to the Doctrine occasionally mention'd, that he concurred in the manner expressed by the Articles offered as a *Test*, yet he added, That he was far from imposing such *Explications* upon his Brethren, because the Imposition of any Thing of humane Contrivance, as necessary in Matters of Religion, and eternal Salvation, charged a Defect upon the Institutions and Commands of our Saviour ; assumed a Right of *Legislature* ; and was the highest Affront possible to the *inspired Writings*, which alone were to be the *Rule of Faith*. This introduced a general Concurrence, as to the Usefulness of *Forms*, *Creeds*, *Catechisms*, *Confessions*, *Interpretations*, &c. to be used by all Persons as they found their Capacities suited to be informed and edified thereby ; but by no means would they allow them a Competition with the *sacred Writings*, or to be *Tests of Church-Membership*.

While

While these Matters were in Transaction, and by Wranglings were drawn out into a needless Length, one of the chief Ends intended by the Weight and Authority of their Decision, was intirely frustrated. For three *dissenting Congregations* in the *West-Country*, proceeded to *actual Exclusion* of their Ministers, for their refusing to subscribe such *Articles of Belief* as they, by the Help of some neighbouring Ministers had thought fit to draw up, and impose upon them as a *Test*. And these were no less Men than Mr. *Pierce*, Mr. *Withers*, and Mr. *Hallet*. The first hath done more Honour to the *Dissenting Interest*, by his *Defence against the Apology for the Church of England*, by Dr. *Nicholson*, and many other of his learned Writings, than all its Advocates besides, put together; the second has, beyond any one of his Brethren, pleaded their Cause; and justify'd them at a late *Caprice of State*, when the *Government* were bearing hard upon them, and, as fast as possible, hastening their Destruction: And the last is a Person eminent in common with the two former, for a worthy, honest Man, a good, useful Neighbour, and an exemplary Christian. Mr. *Pierce*, however, in particular, under this Circumstance, has

has this comfortable Reflexion in his Power, whenever he pleases, that he has a Parallel to his own Case, in a Divine of the Establish'd Church, and to whom it is the highest Honour to have any likeness: Mr. Pierce has seen the Church's best Defender, reviled and slandered in the most shameful manner, by those in her own Communion, only because with his great Abilities to plead her Cause against foreign Enemies, there was also join'd an Integrity of Heart, that would not suffer any Encroachments, Impositions, or humane Innovations, in her Discipline, or Worship; without the warmest Opposition; and who, as much as in them lay, was rendered not *one* of them, for no other Reason, but that he was *the honestest amongst them*. However, at length a virtuous Administration did some Justice to so much Merit, and has rewarded him with one of the highest Stations in *that Church*, to which he had done so much Service and Reputation in a lower Sphere. And it is not to be doubted, but such a Gentleman, and such a Christian, as Mr. Pierce, will find more real Satisfaction, and Comfort in the Friendship and Congratulation of good Men, and the returns of a good Conscience, than in the mean Compliance

to Priestcraft, or Biggotry, if Providence finds not out some more remarkable Way of doing Justice to his Integrity.

Thus, Sir, I have given you this Relation, as it is brought to us, of the Laity, but those who attended upon the whole Affair, and who think it not a Breach of Confidence, or a Disgrace to their Order, to submit the Actions of the Clergy, to the Approbation or Censure of their Friends. And this I trouble you with, not for your particular Information, because you had, as I hear, a Share therein your self, but to observe to you upon a few Heads, wherein this Spirit of *Imposition*, which (thank God) now is dwindling away, is highly unreasonable; and to remark a little upon its Rise, in order somewhat further to expose it the Dislike of those who are yet weak enough to be tainted therewith.

And, in the first Place, I desire it may be asked these Orthodox Gentlemen, What *Conception* they must imagine the *Government*, and their fellow-Subjects must have of them, when they consider this Part of their *Conduct*? The *Legislative Power* has generously taken

take off a great deal of that Load they groaned under, and put them upon a Foot of Liberty equal with other Subjects, and in return for the Favour, are they now shackling one another: Nay, before that very *Bill* had passed the Houses in *Parliament*, which was for making them easy from others Impositions, did they begin with these *spiritu-al Tortures*, and, as fast as possible, hasten to lay their own Brethren under a *holy Bondage*. What must those of the *establis'd Communion* think of these Men, who found there *Dissentions* therefrom upon the *Imposition* of humane *Forms*, and Matters of humane Contrivance and Authority, and yet practise the same *Impositions* themselves? Why may not their Brethren be at liberty, and be excused in so doing, to chuse their own Manner of declaring their Faith, and expressing their Sentiments of Matters touching *Salvation*, as well as they themselves expect to be justified, in *dissenting* from the *National Church* on the same Account? And if the *National Church* may not impose *Creeds*, and *Articles of Faith* upon them, why should they do it themselves upon their Brethren? If a sufficient Power was to take Advantage of this *Creed-making*

Spirit, and require peremptorily their Compliance with some *Forms* they have been hitherto at liberty about, upon the severest *Penalties*, in case of refusal, I cannot well conceive what these Men could have to say for themselves.

But let it be examin'd a little, from what Sources this *Creed-making*, this *Church-paleing* Humour, must arise. And in this Enquiry, Three Causes very readily occur to my Apprehensions, viz. *Pride*, *Knavery*, or *Priestcraft*, and *Enthusiasm*.

1. *Pride* is very likely to have a large Share in this *spiritual Tyranny*. Ambition, and Vain-Glory, may put a great many foremost in these *Impositions*, because there is room for Distinction and Preheminence; whereas the liberty of *Thinking*, *Chusing*, and *Talking*, as every one is guided by his own *Conceptions of Things*, puts all *reasonable Beings* upon a Level: In the former Way, a good Faculty at Believing, and an artful Management thereof, may raise some Men into great Power, and Honour, and throw them into all the Gratifications a *proud Heart* can desire, but the latter promises no other Enjoyments, besides what flow from a good *Conscience*, and the sincere *Approvalation* of

of those who covet no other Superiority, than in being Wise and Virtuous, and who hate all Dominion, but what gives Opportunities of making others the better for it. Besides, we shall generally find most Persons of this Complexion of Faith, as obstinate as possible against others carving out for them ; that it is too plain, their fondness for *Creeds*, *Articles*, and *Tests*, are only because they expect a Part in the making them ; and upon an impartial Review, I fear it will be found true, that the Zeal of our present *Creed*, or *Article-makers*, has been pretty much in Proportion to the Share they expected in composing them.

2. This Practice is so well calculated for the support of a false Authority, which may, as far as I can see, be indifferently called, either *Knavery* or *Priest-craft*, that it is impossible for the Substance of *that* without it. The *Clergy* of the *Romish Church* have learned to play this Game with admirable Dexterity, in so much that the *Laity* have not only their Consciences, but their Souls too, devolved in their Custody. If it is once given up to the Parson to prescribe the Rule of my Faith, the Consequences of *Non-Compliance* are solely in his Power, and all that's valuable in this World, may be

be demanded, at Pleasure, as a Purchase of the Parson's Interest in another. But, in this View, all the Tricks, and Leger-de-main of *Rome*, so naturally drawn into the same Prospect, that I would, by no means, have any one who bears the Name of *Protestant*, be seen in the same Picture.

3. *Enthusiasm*, however, gives a great deal of room to a *Faith-Maker*, without bearing too hard upon his Integrity. A Person who is weak enough to found Pretensions to a continual *Inspiration*, upon a Revelation once given, may palm *Creeds* upon us every Day, because he has all at *first Hand*, and bring every thing immediately from Heaven: But this is a Distinction, I dare say, these Gentlemen are not fond of coming into. To all those who do, I am entirely for giving them the Liberty of venting, so that they hurt not the State, nor the Peace of Society; and rather than do them the Credit of a serious Opposition, I am in the Opinion of a very considerable Author, to apply to them the Ridicule, being fully satisfied, that *Heresy* is much sooner to be destroyed in a Droll, than at the Stake.

I cannot possibly distinguish between one *Infallibility* and another, and, without

out immediate *Inspiration*, no Pretensions of that kind, can be supported; Vnone but the *Enthusiast* then can be allowed to be a *Faith-Maker*, with any Consistency. If we go off from the Words of *Inspiration*, we must go to some Body *inspired*, or else we mend not the Matter. But if it is not allowed that there are such Persons, with what safety can we leave out Bibles in Matters of *Faith*? I know no difference between one Man and another in this Case; and I take my self as excusable to go to the *Pope*, as to any of these Gentlemen. What avails the Reformation, and our Renunciation of the Impositions of *Rome*, if we practice them upon one another? It is not the *Crucifix*, the *Beads*, and other *Pegeaantries* of the *Romish Church*, that is the chief Grounds of Separation from them, but their *Lording it over our Faith*, their *Usurpations in Christ's Kingdom*, and *assuming what only belongs to God, or Men immediately taught by Him*; how then can we claim the same Power our selves? There is no *Medium*; if the inspired Writings are defective, as to a Rule of *Faith*, and if humane Interpretations, humane Dicisions, and humane Forms, are necessary for our *Conduct* and *Assistance*, we may as well go to *Rome*, as to any

any other Humane Authority ; but if the inspired Writings are a sufficient Rule of Faith, and we are required to adhere to them as such, and not to rely upon, or take up with, any humane Interpretations, as the Measure of our Belief and Practice, then we are no more justified in resting upon, or giving heed to, a *Creed* made at *Salters-Hall*, than one made at the *Vatican* ; and, to all Intents and Purposes, does Mr. *Bradbury*, or any of those Gentlemen offend as much against the Authority of *Christ*, in requiring a Compliance to *Creeds* of their making, as Tests of Faith and Orthodoxy, as the *Pope* himself does, or any other Authority in the *romish Church* ; What signifies the Name *Protestant*, and railing against *Rome* in Trifles, while we practice among our selves the worst of her Impostures ? A Man may flatter himself with what Distinctions he pleases, but if he maintains the Essentials of *Popery*, as every *Creed-maker* does, he shall ever be, in my account, a *Papist* ; and let the *Orthodox* of *Salters-Hall* get off the Impputation as well as they can.

Before these Gentlemen, therefore, who dissent from their Brethren, in making the *Scriptures only* a Rule of Faith, and a Belief in them *only*, a Condition of Church-

Church-Membership, go on any further in imposing their own Inventions for those great Purposes, it is well if they would cool a little, and consider the Consequences of their Conduct. Their Endeavours to frustrate the Authority of those Divisions in open Assembly, by private Subscriptions, without Doors, which they are now labouring for, will not only render the pacifick Schemes concerted for their own Advantage, as well as the Honour of the Government, abortive, and of no Effect, but also lay a Foundation for all the Hardships, that a superior Power may at any Time hereafter, think fit to put upon themselves ; they can never, with any tolerable Countenance, disclaim against *Persecution*, who, in their Turns, have been *Persecutors* : For the imposing any Matter in *Christianity*, as essential thereunto, which is not so, on the Penalty of *exclusion from christian Communion*, for *non-compliance*, is the worst of *Persecution*, to every one who makes Conscience of social Worship, and of commemorating the Death and Redemption of Jesus Christ, with all of the same Faith in him, upon those essential Points.

I cannot but think, when I hear what a Bustie some make about *Orthodoxy*, and *soundness of Faith*, that such forget themselves to be Men, because if they did not, they would consider that every Man is *Orthodox* to himself: As we are all then to be allowed *fallible*, and variously determined in our Judgments, by an Infinite almost of Accidents and Circumstances, why should the particular Turn of one Man's Mind, be made the *Standard* of another's Rectitude in *Thinking*? The assumption, therefore, of any *Credenda*, which some Men can come into, to be made a Rule for all others, is what belongs not to a *fallible Being*, let them never so much bear the *Stamp* of *Orthodoxy*, because there are no opposite Propositions that have any *Believers*, but are every jot as *Orthodox* to those who believe them: And, as every Man is to answer for himself only in such Cases, it is the highest *Arrogancy*, as well as the highest *Folly*, for any other to prescribe a Rule for his *Conduct*, in Matters of Belief. Any Person, therefore, who duly reflects upon his own *Fallibility*, will never pretend to obtrude his own *Determinations* upon others, nor be uneasy with others, for concluding differently,

if

if they agree but in such *Essentials* as are inseparable from Sincerity, and Integrity of Mind.

How far the abovemention'd Sources of *Orthodoxy*, might influence our present *Creed-makers*, I will not pretend to determine ; Three of them, particularly I hear, had brought new *Draughts* for a *Creed* ; but they not readily answering to the Demand of *Infallibility*, the pious Workmanship was returned upon their Hands ; which gave such a mortifying Shock to those Gentlemen, as may not be easy to express ; but on the Returns, and Glowings of Resentment, when the *Paroxysm* was strong upon them, they might naturally enough call to mind, the Description of the *Sibyl's* Agonies in *Virgil* :

— *Subito non Vultus, non Color unus,*
Non compt& mansere corn&; sed Petus an-

(belum,
Et Rabie fera Cordatum ; majorq; videri
Nec mortale sonans : afflata est Numine

(quando
Jam propiore Dei —

And again ;

— *Immanis in Antro*
Bacchatur Vates, magnum si Pectore possit
Excusisse Deum —

One of this hopeful Triumvirate is, it seems, the Successor of Mr. Flemming, at *Founders-Hall*; but in this *Conduct*, he appears but very ill to have Copied after that worthy Minister, who in a Discourse titled, *An Account of Religion as it centers in Christ*, thus declares himself on this Point of *Creed-making*.

“ Tho’ I pay all due Deference to the *Confessions of Faith* made by the reformed Churches, and more particularly that excellent One composed by the *Assembly at Westminster*; yet I cannot otherwise subscribe to any humane Composition, as the Foundation of my Faith, but in as far as it self is founded on the holy Word of God, which I must own to be my only *Creed, Confession of Faith, and System of Divinity*, in the strictest and most proper Sense. For it is in obedience to Christ, that I am obliged to call no Man *Father of my Religion*, but God, nor any Man the infallible *Teacher of it, but Himself.* ”

But the most wonderful Circumstance of this Affair, is, that Mr. Bradbury too should be amongst the Prophets, and become a *New Revelation-maker*; there seems

seems to be no manner of Connexion between a Flaming Loyalty, and the Calenture of Orthodoxy; hallowing for King George in the Streets, and voting for Slavery within Doors; the Huzzas of a Mob, and the Decrees of a Synod; the Mirth of a Song, and the Severity of a Creed: And yet so it is, this merry Soneteer, is become a most orthodox Father, who can account for it? There was, indeed, some Affinity between being a facetious Companion, and a witty Preacher; between the Levity of a Jeff, and Whipt-Cream Divinity; and it may be accounted for, how the *Laugh of Conversation* should froth over again, and trifle pleasantly in a Pulpit. How agreeably pretty was an Expression of this Gentleman concerning the Athanasian Creed, that it was a *twirl of Words fitter for a Chymist than a Christian?* Who at that Time could have thought it, that he himself should set up for a *Twirlster*, and practice the Chymist upon his Neighbours, who had been so unsufferably Witty against Imposture?

Sir, I desire your Excuse for this Levity, the Mirth of the Subject is catching, and there is no speaking of Mr. Bradbury in any other Turn. The Solemnity

lempny of the Cloak cannot conceal the Humour of the Bottle; and the Familiarity of plain Tom, will never be able to throw off an Acquaintance into the Distance that is due to reverend Tom, tho' guarded with all the Artillery of his Spiritualities.

After this general Account of this Transaction, and these Reflections upon the Obstructions given therein, by proud, angry Men, I come to the most agreeable Part of my Design, *viz.* To congratulate with you, upon the Honour done to the *Dissenters*, as a Body, by the Majority of their Ministers declaring for Liberty, in the fullest and most important Acceptation of that Term. And in this Part, I conceive it necessary to take notice of some part of the *Charge* brought against *Dissenters*, by the Writer of their *Conduct* considered.

There they stand accused for such a Narrowness of Principle, and such a Severity of Behaviour, as makes it even unsafe for the Government to trust them in Places of Power, and throws them out of a Right to all those Privileges, which are the Consequence of the Bishop of Bangor's Doctrine of Liberty. I know not of what Prejudice it can be to give

it up to that Author, for Argument's sake, that they have been *narrow* enough, and have behaved themselves sufficiently blameable, on some particular *Conjunctions*; but with what Justice can they be thus charged now? We have seen national and popular Reformations, as well as personal; a Community, therefore, is no more to be upbraided with past Errors, after they have renounced them, than any single *Penitent* with past Crimes. If they have been misled in Points of Conscience, and Christian Freedom, they have seen their Error, and have now resolved to conduct themselves by more generous Principles. They have pronounced it reasonable to give the same Allowance to others in *Dissenting* from them, as they require in excuse for their own *Dissentions*; and as they deny *Infallibility* to others, so they disclaim it in themselves.

I shall not pretend to be so particular as some, in accounting for this happy Change, and think it not worth Disputing about its chief Motives; and am willing enough to own, as some will have it, that the generous Sentiments of the Bishop of Bangor, and his noble Defences, and Explanations of the Doctrine of Liberty, both *Civil* and *Religious*,

gious, has had a great Share herein, as likewise that the Example, and Conduct of the present Government, hath had a great Influence in defusing a publick Spirit, and rendering Humanity, Charity, Forgiveness, and all the true Attributes of a generous Mind, the most fashionable Virtues.

This happy Union of his Majesty's Subjects in true Principles of Liberty, will, it is to be hoped, be a great Addition to that collective Power of the Nation, in defeating all Projects and Attempts that may affect our Constitution, and tend to introduce *Slavery* of any sort. And I cannot but on this Occasion, let my Thoughts run so forward into Futurity, as to imagine somewhat like the following, may be the composure of an Historian in Ages to come.

“ Ever since the grand Reformation, “ from the Errors of *Rome*, and the setting a National Protestant Church, “ that allow'd no Head under *Jesus Christ*, but the regal Power ; there continu'd an uneasy Dissention therefrom amongst some who were yet for carrying the Work further : They were at first called by the general Name of “ *Puritans*, because they asserted a greater “ *Purity*,

" Purity in Religion, than the *national* re-
 " formed Church, but after some Time,
 " they broke out into many subordinate
 " Distinctions, who often likewise gave
 " Uneasiness to one another. The
 " Legislature sometimes put them under
 " Restraints and Hardships ; but such
 " Measures were found generally to ren-
 " der them more obstinate, and to streng-
 " then their Interest ; and thus, as the
 " Policy, or *Caprice* of the *Administration*,
 " gave them more or less Liberty, did
 " they continue more or less united with
 " one another ; but it was always obser-
 " ved, that the *easier* they were made by
 " their Superiors, the more uncharitably
 " they behaved amongst themselves, in-
 " somuch that they would often practise
 " the same *Impositions*, as to *Matters of*
 " *Faith and Discipline*, upon their Bre-
 " thren, as they complained against with
 " bitterness in the *national Church*, and
 " all other Churches. But in the Reign
 " of K. George the 1st, Affairs were tran-
 " sacted with so much Candor, Justice,
 " and good Sense, that a publick Spirit run-
 " thro' the whole Kingdom : The Parli-
 " ament repealed *Acts* that laid some par-
 " ticular Subjects under *Disqualifications*
 " for Service, and put the *Dissenters* up-
 " on a Foot with their fellow Subjects ;
 " and the *Dissenters* themselves, by a

" Synod, or an Assembly of their Ministers in the City of *London*, passed some Articles in Form as Tests of Communion and Church-Membership, wherein nothing was made necessary thereunto, but a Belief in the inspired Writings; and the Holy Scriptures alone were made the Rule of their Faith. There were indeed some violent Tempers, who opposed these christian Measures, and were yet for retaining humane Forms for Articles of Faith; but they were out-voted, and the good Sence, and benevolent Conduct of that Reign, soon won them over to Conviction, or shamed them out of their Obstancies, and spiritual Impositions. To this good Disposition, very much contributed the *Preaching* and *Writings* of an eminent Prelate, first Bishop of *Bangor*, — who, notwithstanding great Opposition, at last silenced all his Enemies, entirely vanquished the *Remains of Papacy*, and brought *christian Liberty*, and a *reasonable Religion*, into the greatest Esteem.

Thus, Sir, altho' a Stranger to you personally, I have been free in laying my Thoughts before you on this Affair; and I hope this Freedom will not draw any Resentment, or Invective upon you, by those who may be displeased hereby, that can give a good Man any Uneasiness: Their Temper I know too well, but their Power, I thank God, is restrained. That you may long live to assist in the propagation of Principles of Liberty and true Religion, and in defeating Superstition, and Priest-craft, is the sincere Wish of your most humble Servant, &c.

POST.

POSTSCRIPT.

Some Uneasiness I have been under, at the Freedom taken with your Name, in the foregoing Narrative and Remarks, and at the Publication of Matters much fitter for Concealment, is now entirely removed; and I find my first Inducements thereunto, from the Apprehensions of having it mangled and falsified in the common Papers, justified by the *Flying-Post* of last Saturday.

By what hath been already said, it too much appears, with what Injustice, Vehemency, and even ill-Manners it was managed on the Part of the *Creed-makers*, or *Orthodox*, when debating in open Assembly; but that when they were out-Voted, they should palm themselves upon the World for the *London Ministers*, by a common Intelligence, and abuse and falsify their Brethren who were a Majority, by the same Conveyance, is such a Sample of *holy Fury*, and *orthodox Honesty*, as cannot be matched in History; but a *Fool's Coat*, it seems, is of equal use to all kinds of *Imposture*; and *Orthodoxy*, as well as *Physick*, a *Creed* as well as a *Pacquet*, may have its Advantage in being handed to the Mob in such a Dres.

I have not leisure, at present, to take due Notice of all the Falsehood, which these pious *London* Ministers have thought fit to convey through that reputable Informer the *Flying-Post*, and shall therefore only observe to you, upon a Passage or two that are plain Contradictions.

The main Question here, as before taken Notice, is wilfully misrepresented, for it was never suffered to be put what Opinion the Minister's present were of, with relation to the Trinity, but whether any humane Compositions on that Head should be made a Test of Church-Membership. This was before said to be carry'd in the Negative by a Majority, and for Reasons already given: All private Reasons, then with the Minority for making somewhat of that kind a Test, and their Protests, and Proceeding afterwards, signify'd nothing as to the Authority of that Assembly, and were to all Intents and Purposes extrajudicial. The Harangues therefore of their hopeful Advocate, about the Boasts of Dr. C——ks Disciples, the Soundness of their Test-Articles, and the Imputation of *Anti-Trinitarianism*, can have no other Effect than to shew a great deal of Pride and ill Nature, as well as Folly; for what Success could such an Assembly possibly hope for, in putting a stop to the Differences amongst their Brethren

thren in the Country, when they actu-
ally should go into Parties with them,
upon the very Subject, about which they
were in difference? But to be an *Anti-*
Trinitarian, it seems, is something so dread-
ful, that those Men are resolv'd to get
rid of it, tho' at the expence of their Chri-
stianity, and rather than be unsound in
Doctrine, will be inhumane and unsocia-
ble in their Behaviour.

The rest of this Scribler's Falsification
I shall take Notice of in his own Words:

' For these Reasons, the *Forms* above-
' written, and *no other*, were offer'd: And
' the *Body of London Ministers*, to the
' Number of *Threescore*, personally and *di-*
' *stinctly* subscrib'd bout the *Articles*, and
' *Answers*, as expressive of the *Scripture*
' *Doctrine* of the *Holy Trinity*, which
' *therefore* they heartily believe, and
' *gladly* bore their *publick Testimony* to.

' These *Sixty*, without pretending to
' impose upon any, invited their Brethren
' to join with them in the same *Declar-*
' *ration* and *Subscription*, but could not
' have the Satisfaction of obtaining it; but
' instead of this, the rest proceeded by
' themselves, to the *Consideration* of the
' *Paper of Advices*, as more agreeable to
' their *Inclination*, and pass'd 'em as they
' *pleas'd*. Upon which, they that sub-
' scrib'd had nothing left them to do, but

' as

as the BODY of the *Ministers of London*,
 in a solemn Message by Two of their
 Members, to PROTEST against all
 Proceedings of the rest in their absence,
 and so left the Place.

They that refus'd to subscribe the
 foresaid *Article* and *Answers* concerning
 the *Trinity*, staid behind, to the Num-
 ber of Fifty; of which, near one third
 could not be reckon'd stated *Ministers* in
 or near *London*, much less *Pastors* of
Churches there; but collected from far,
 out of several *Counties*, and to serve the
 Purposes of those that sent for 'em: And
 what is represented with so *assuming* an
 Air, in the Account publish'd, as *re-
 solv'd*, and *asserted*, and *finish'd*, and
carry'd, &c. is, after all, to be under-
 stood only as what was done by this
mixt Company that staid behind, and ad-
 journ'd themselves from time to time,
 calling in what new Numbers they
 could, after the *Body* of the *Ministers of
 London* had born their *Testimony* and
Protest as above, and were withdrawn.

Herein you will observe, that the
 Number 53, who voted for a *humane Test*,
 is increased to 60; and 57, the Number
 against it, sunk to 50, with the Addition
 of the impudent Calumny of their not
 being above two *Thirds* stated *Ministers*.

But the most remarkable Absurdity
 that

that a blind Zeal hath thrown this Relater into, is, That he should assume a Majority, call them, *the Body of the Ministers of London, &c.* and yet bring them into a Protest against the other Side, the *Minority*, and leave the Chair, and Place of Assembly, for them to continue acting in, in Form, until the whole they came about was finished. It is a Matter blameable enough, in Point of Order and Decency, for a *Minority*, in any Assembly where the Authority of their Decisions is taken from the Votes of the greater Number, to dispute the Legality and Force of any thing so passed, and much more to oppose to, or bring into Competition, the Opinion of the lesser with that of the greater Number; and this is what was never suffered in any civilized Communities; and yet these very orthodox Gentlemen, not only behave with Rudeness and Ill-manners to a *Majority*, by which they are out-voted in open Assembly, and contest the Validity of their Decisions; but in the most scandalous Conveyance possible, falsely hand it to the World, *that they are the Majority*; tho' with this Self-Contradiction, at the same Time, that they Protested against the other, and left the Place: For it was never before known, that the greater Number quitted the Place of Business for the lesser,

lesser, and had occasion to Protest against their Proceedings. These Gentlemen, indeed, are very fit to be trusted with *Creed-making* for others, who have not Integrity enough to relate a Matter of Fact, without *Perversion* and *Falshood* ! But, with the Trade of *Rome*, they may, perhaps, engross her *Policies* too ; with her *Infallibility*, put on her *Honesty*, and be as crafty, as they are *Orthodox*.

— *Pudet hæc opprobria !*

I know, Sir, it must be yours, and every good Man's *Concern*, and *Shame*, to see or hear of these Things ; but some Alleviation it is to such a Concern, that *Truth* and *Integrity* have fair Play against *Craft* and *Imposture*. And let these Men carry their *Enthusiastick* or *political Fury* of *Orthodoxy* as far as they please, they may depend upon it, that in these Times of *Liberty*, *Openess*, and *Forbearance*, they will be marked amongst the *Disturbers of our Peace*.

We are now allarmed with an Invasion in favour of a *Popish Prince* ; and the very same Reasons that make me against their Success, determine me also to be against those Invaders of our Faith : For I had as lieve another Man should have the *Property* of my Person, or Estate, as of my Conscience, and my Understanding. *I am, &c.*

F I N I S.